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BLACK AND WHITE:

A Love Story,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS AND CHARLES FECHTER.

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[NOT PUBLISHED.]  
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LONDON :

PRINTED BY C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

1869.

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MAURICE DE LAYRAC . . . *A French Gentleman.*
STEPHEN WESTCRAFT . . . *A rich Planter.*
DAVID MICHAELMAS . . . *De Layrac's Servant.*
THE PROVOST MARSHAL.
MR. PLATO *A Negro.*
WOLF *Westcraft's Slave.*
GEORGE *Miss Milburn's Servant.*

MISS MILBURN *An Heiress.*
MRS. PENFOLD *Her Friend.*
MISS WESTCRAFT *Westcraft's Sister.*
RUTH *A Quadroon.*
PHOEBE *Miss Milburn's Maid.*
Guests. Inhabitants of Trinidad. Slaves, &c. &c.

The Scene is in the Island of Trinidad.
The Period in the beginning of the Year 1830.

See Mrs. Ray 21 Nov. 50 Quarto

ACT I.

FIRST SCENE.—*The boudoir in MISS MILBURN'S house.*

The room, very prettily furnished, and brilliantly lit, opens at the back of the stage on a terrace overlooking a garden. There are also side entrances on the right and left. The entrance on the actors' right is supposed to lead into MISS MILBURN'S room. The entrance on the left leads into the garden. It is a fine moonlight night. The terrace is lit by coloured lamps. Ladies and gentlemen, in evening dress, pass and repass on it. Other ladies and gentlemen are in the boudoir. Among them are MRS. PENFOLD and WESTCRAFT. At the rise of the curtain the music of a waltz is heard faintly in the distance, and continues to be heard under the voices of the speakers.

WEST. (*looking about him*). Where is Miss Milburn? She is engaged to me for this waltz—and I can't find her anywhere.

MRS. P. Isn't she in the ball-room?

WEST. No. I don't understand the lady of the house hiding herself from her guests in this way.

MRS. P. Perhaps she is in the card-room?

WEST. I have just come from the card-room.

A GENTLEMAN (*addressing the ladies in the boudoir, from the terrace*). Ladies! the last waltz of the evening has begun.

(*The ladies and gentlemen in the boudoir go out. The terrace is deserted.*

WESTCRAFT and MRS. PENFOLD are left together.)

WEST. (*angrily*). This is a nice position for a man to be left in! If Miss Milburn thinks as little of her engagement to marry me as she thinks of her engagement to dance with me——

MRS. P. Hush! hush!

WEST. Hav'n't I some reason to complain? She never treated me in this way before she took the voyage to Europe. I begin to suspect there is some other man at the bottom of it.

MRS. P. Absurd! You have simply missed each other in the ball-room. Go back, and see.

WEST. Do you think so?

MRS. P. I am sure of it.

WEST. Well! I won't judge in a hurry. I'll look again.

(*He goes out by the terrace.*)

MRS. P. Mr. Westcraft is beginning to discover that Miss Milburn doesn't care for him. I don't understand it, myself. What can have altered her since she came back? (*MISS MILBURN appears at the side entrance on the right.*) Good Heavens, Emily! where have you been hiding yourself?

MISS M. In my own room. I felt strongly tempted to go to bed. On second thoughts, I'll yield to the temptation. Good night, Jane!

MRS. P. Nonsense! Come and sit down here by me. This is your birthday party. You can't leave your guests in that way.

MISS M. (*seating herself*). Don't speak of my birthday party! The worry of it is perfectly unbearable.

MRS. P. My dear child! are you awake? or dreaming? You are engaged to dance this waltz with Mr. Westcraft. He is looking for you everywhere.

MISS M. I wish the earth would open and swallow Mr. Westcraft up! (*Addressing GEORGE, who crosses the terrace.*) See if there are any ices left, and bring some if there are.

MRS. P. Your voyage to Europe, Emily, has changed you very strangely.

MISS M. I must have been out of my senses to go to Europe! Why didn't I stop here?

MRS. P. How could you stop here, when the doctors all declared the sea-voyage to be necessary to your health? Why should you regret your voyage to Europe?

MISS M. I have a reason.

MRS. P. A secret, I suppose?

MISS M. Yes—No! I don't know. I'm so unhappy! I have a great mind to tell you. I will.—Jane! London is a horrid dirty ugly smoky place. But I don't complain of having been to London. It's Paris I wish with all my heart I had never seen!

MRS. P. The gayest city in the world. How very odd!

MISS M. Not at all odd! Bury what I am going to tell you, next, in the deepest secrecy. I should never have seen him, if I had not gone to Paris.

MRS. P. Him? Can't you describe him more particularly than that?

MISS M. The most charming man in existence!

MRS. P. (*slyly*). Mr. Westcraft?

MISS M. (*indignantly*). Mr. Westcraft! You have no feeling—you turn the most serious things into a joke!

(*Enter RUTH, with ices on a tray.*)

MISS M. (*to RUTH*). Why are you still here? You know how ill you have been—I told you you were not fit to wait at the party. Go home—do pray go home!

RUTH. Yes, missy—yes. I only waited to give you your ice. Take the pineapple ice. I made them, and I know which is best.

MISS M. (*taking an ice from the tray, and then putting it back again*). No! now it has come, I don't want it. I don't know what I want! It isn't your fault, Ruth—I'm sorry I troubled you.

RUTH. I'll find something you like, missy—never fear!
(*She goes out.*)

MISS M. (*looking after RUTH*). I wonder whether there is anybody—except that poor old Quadroon—who really loves me? I spoke to the doctor about her this morning, Jane. He said she had got a heart-complaint; and, at her age, he owned frankly there was nothing to be done.

MRS. P. Is Ruth your slave?

MISS M. No. She is a slave on a plantation close to

mine, called "The Upper Croft." The owner has been absent for years—and Ruth is allowed to earn a little money by making ices for any one who will employ her. She does her best, poor thing! But the ices in Trinidad are not to be compared with the ices in Paris.

MRS. P. No more than Mr. Westcraft is to be compared with the French gentleman! What is his name?

MISS M. (*without noticing the question*). I see how it is, Jane. You don't say so in words. But you blame me for admiring anybody but Mr. Westcraft!

MRS. P. No. I only think you might have remembered Mr. Westcraft.

MISS M. I hate Mr. Westcraft!

MRS. P. Since you have seen the French gentleman? May I ask how you met with him?

MISS M. In the best society to be sure! He is a man of rank and distinction. You needn't look at me, Jane, as if you thought I had encouraged him! I don't deny—when we met at balls—that we danced together, till the lady of the house separated us. But I never encouraged him! I don't deny that Fate always placed us together at supper. Who can control Fate? I don't deny that we constantly met, in the most unaccountable manner, in the daytime. But I am sure it wasn't his fault, and it certainly couldn't have been mine. How you stare! Don't you understand me? I wish I was dead! Do you understand that?

MRS. P. Is it so serious, Emily? Did you so completely forget Mr. Westcraft——?

MISS M. You are enough to drive one mad? Who ever said I forgot Mr. Westcraft?

MRS. P. Compose yourself, my dear—and tell me one thing more. On what terms did you part with this irresistible man?

MISS M. On the terms of an innocent flirtation—nothing more. I remembered Mr. Westcraft, and I behaved like the most heartless woman in existence. Circumstances placed us behind a door—and Fate put my hand in his. He whispered, "When shall I see you again?" I laughed it off. I said, "I am going back to

the West Indies. If you want to see me again, you must come to Trinidad." He said, "Make an appointment with me, and I'll come." You must see for yourself that we were neither of us in earnest. A more innocent flirtation could not possibly be. I said, "What! all the way from Paris?" He said, "All the way from Nova Zembla, if necessary." I said, "Very well—there is always a party at Trinidad on my birthday. Come to my birthday." He took out his pocket-book, and wrote down the date and the address—just as if it was an engagement in the next street! He said, "I accept your invitation, Miss Milburn." And I laughed. And there was an end of it.

(Enter WESTCRAFT, by the terrace.)

WEST. She's not in the ball-room—I'll swear to that. *(Seeing MISS M.)* Oh! there you are! This is a nice way of treating a man, when you are engaged to dance with him.

MISS M. *(indifferently)*. I am very sorry. I can't dance any more.

(The music ceases.)

WEST. *(to MISS M.)*. Why can't you dance any more?

MISS M. *(impatiently)*. I am not well. I have got a headache?

(She leaves him, and crosses the stage to the left. MRS. P. follows her.)

WESTCRAFT turns away angrily, on his side, and speaks to his sister.)

MRS. P. *(to MISS M.)*. Why do you irritate his violent temper?

MISS M. Because I detest him—that's why!

MRS. P. Not because you remember the French gentleman, I suppose? *(RUTH appears silently, entering by the terrace.)* By-the-by, you haven't told me his name yet.

MISS M. His name? *(She notices RUTH.)* Not gone home? Oh, Ruth! Ruth!

RUTH *(to MISS M.)*. You didn't like the pineapple ice, missy. The orange ices are just ready. Will you have one?

MISS M. No ! no ! not now.

(GEORGE appears on the terrace.)

MRS. P. (to MISS M.). Once more, Emily !—what is his name ?

GEORGE (announcing). The Count de Layrac.

(MISS MILBURN starts violently, and turns towards the terrace, with a cry of surprise. The cry is echoed by RUTH. MAURICE appears. (The guests follow him, appearing on either side of the terrace, but not entering the boudoir.)

RUTH (after a glance at MAURICE). De Layrac ! Maurice de Layrac, here !!!

(She puts her hand, as if seized by a spasm of pain, to her heart, and waits, looking eagerly at MAURICE. As he advances, she moves away so as not to be seen by him—but still remains on the stage, looking at him, and listening to him, without attracting his notice.

MAUR. (looking about among the guests). Miss Milburn ? (He sees MISS M. standing speechless with surprise, and advances to her.) Have I made any mistake ? (He opens his pocket-book, and reads.) “ New Year’s Day, eighteen hundred and thirty. Miss Milburn’s birthday party. Trinidad.” This is the Island of Trinidad. To-day is New Year’s Day. And here, surely, is the birthday party ?—Pray accept my apologies for being late ! The ship only entered the harbour an hour since.

(RUTH, after a last look at MAURICE, goes out by the terrace.)

MISS M. (trying to compose herself). Accept my apologies, Count, for appearing surprised to see you. I never supposed you were in earnest, when you accepted my invitation.

MAUR. I was never more in earnest in my life—as you see.

WEST. (to MISS M.), Who is this ?

MAUR. (aside—after looking at WESTCRAFT). A mem-

ber of the family, evidently. Too rude to be anything else!

MISS M. (*confusedly introducing MAURICE*). A friend whom I met when I was in Paris. Count de Layrac.

WEST. Oh!

MAUR. (*offering his hand*). An English shake-hands, if you please, sir. Miss Milburn's brother, I presume?

WEST. No!

MAUR. Her uncle, perhaps? There are such young uncles in the world!

WEST. Nothing of the sort!

MAUR. How stupid I am! Her cousin, of course! (*Forcing WESTCRAFT to shake hands with him*). Delighted to make your acquaintance. It has been the dream of my life to see this superb island. I have read all about you. Your productions are sugar-canes, liquorice, cocoa, tobacco, pigs, parrots, musquitoes, cockroaches, monkeys, rats. Shall I see them all, under your kind auspices? Yes, I feel assured I shall! (*To Miss M.*) I have taken a fancy to your cousin—I like his nice brown face.

WEST. (*to MAUR.*). I don't doubt your assurance, Mr. Count. But I *do* doubt your seeing the productions of the island, if you wait for *me* to show them to you.

MAUR. Then I won't wait! Anything to be agreeable to *you*.

WEST. Thank you. Fine words butter no parsnips.

MAUR. What! more productions of this superb island? Fine words, butter, parsnips—in addition to sugar-canes, liquorice, cocoa, tobacco, pigs, parrots, musquitoes, cockroaches, monkeys, rats! This is the earthly paradise—(*whispering to Miss M.*)—and you are the angel who inhabits it!

A GENTLEMAN (*to WESTCRAFT*). Mr. Westcraft, your sister wishes to speak to you.

MISS WEST. (*to her brother*). It's getting late, Stephen. I am afraid I must trouble you to see me home.

WEST. Wait a minute. (*He addresses MAURICE.*) If you have got anything to say to Miss Milburn, you needn't whisper it. Speak out!

MAUR. As you do?

WEST. Yes!

MAUR. A thousand thanks—I'd rather whisper!

MISS WEST. (*to her brother*). Stephen! I really must go home!

WEST. (*angrily*). Come along then! Where's my servant? Wolf! Have you got your mistress's cloak?

MAUR. (*looking at WESTCRAFT*). Another production of this superb island. Bears!

(WOLF appears on the terrace, with MISS WESTCRAFT'S cloak on his arm. His mulatto complexion and his dress mark him out strongly, but not ridiculously, among the other persons assembled. He puts the cloak on MISS WESTCRAFT'S shoulders, and waits on the terrace.)

MISS WEST. (*taking leave of MISS M.*). Thank you, my dear, for a pleasant evening.

MISS M. (*offering her hand next to WESTCRAFT*). Good night!

WEST. No—not yet. I have a word or two to say to you. I shall be back directly.

(*He goes out with his sister, followed by WOLF. The rest of the company take leave of MISS MILBURN—and leave her alone with MAURICE.*)

MAUR. Must I go too? Ah, Miss Milburn, you were not in earnest when you invited me to your birthday party!

MISS M. Of course not! You were not in earnest either. You have come here to see the West Indies—you have come here to see some other lady.

MAUR. I have come here to see you.

MISS M. All the way from Paris? Across I don't know how many oceans? Absurd!

MAUR. It would be the height of absurdity, but for one circumstance.

MISS M. What is that?

MAUR. When you left Paris, you took all the better part of me away with you. I have simply come here to find it again,

MISS M. Mere flattery!

MAUR. Absolute truth.

MISS M. I don't believe you.

MAUR. You might believe me, if you would look at me. No? (*He points to a glass fixed in Miss M.'s fan.*) Will you look at yourself, then? I rest the defence of my extraordinary conduct entirely on what you will see there!

MISS M. (*forgetting herself*). Maurice!

MAUR. You are beginning to believe me. One look at me! I have come all the way from Paris—I have crossed I don't know how many oceans—don't I deserve one look? (*He turns suddenly towards the terrace.*) Who's there?

(DAVID MICHAELMAS *appears on the terrace.*)

MICH. I beg your pardon, sir!

(*He turns to go out again.*)

MISS M. Stop! (*To MAURICE.*) Isn't that the old servant whom you had when I was in Paris?

MAUR. Yes. (*To MICHAELMAS.*) What do you want here?

MISS M. Come in, David. How do you do?

MICH. (*entering*). Nicely thank you, miss.

MISS M. You made yourself very useful to me in Paris. If I can do anything for you in Trinidad, you must let me know. You are quite a stranger here, of course?

MICH. Not exactly, miss. This is my second visit to Trinidad. (*Whispering to MAURICE.*) Could I speak to you, sir?

MISS M. What in the world brought you here before.

MICH. My plantation brought me here, miss. And my plantation sent me away again. (*Whispering to MAURICE.*) Could I say a word, sir?

MISS M. (*to MAURICE*). His plantation? What does he mean?

MAUR. (*smiling*). Did you ever hear David's surname, when you were in Paris?

MISS M. No. Everybody called him David.

MAUR. Christian name—David. Surname—Michaelmas.

MISS M. What! The absentee proprietor of the plantation next to mine? Your servant the owner of Upper Croft!

MAUR. I never knew it myself, till I told him I was coming here. Then, Mr. David Michaelmas modestly

informed me that I had the honour of being waited on by a West Indian proprietor.

MICH. The truth is, miss, the story isn't much to my credit—or I should have told it long ago. I was in service, when I came, unexpectedly, into my property here; and my property here was the ruin of me. My agent cheated me—I couldn't manage the estate, myself—and I couldn't sell it, just at that time. I mortgaged it for as much as I could get; I returned to Europe to speculate with the money; I lost every farthing; I went back to service; and I have been a happier man ever since. (*Whispering to MAURICE.*) Could you give me a minute in private, sir?

MAUR. (*impatiently*). Can't you wait?

MISS M. Speak to your master, Michaelmas, by all means.

(*She walks away a few steps.*)

MAUR. (*to MISS M.*). Pray excuse me—I won't be a moment. (*To MICHAELMAS.*) Now then, what is it?

MICH. It's a woman, sir.

MISS M. (*overhearing him, and speaking aside*). A woman! (*She moves further away, with the look and manner of a person who is offended.*)

MAUR. (*to MICHAELMAS*). What do you mean?

MICH. Something out of the common, sir, in your experience. It's an *old* woman, this time—one of the sort known in these parts by the name of Quadroon. She wants to see you instantly.

MAUR. I know nothing about her. Some mistake.

MICH. No mistake, sir. She saw you come in here—and she told me plainly you were in danger in this island. Something wrong, sir—and it's worth inquiring into, if I may presume to say so.

MAUR. Wait in the garden—and I'll come to you directly.

MICH. Very good, sir.

(*He bows to MISS M., and goes out.*)

MAUR. (*looking at his watch, and approaching MISS M.*) Are all the rooms deserted? Is it possible that everybody has gone?

MISS M. (*concealing her anger from MAURICE*). I am afraid it's getting late.

MAUR. Is that a hint to me to go?

MISS M. (*with feigned gaiety*). Look at my empty rooms—and call it a sacrifice to propriety! Say good-night, Count—and you shall come and see me to-morrow.

MAUR. (*in the same tone*). I accept a bribe, for the first time in my life. To-morrow?

MISS M. To-morrow.

MAUR. (*kissing her hand*). You are more charming than ever!

MISS M. Adieu!

MAUR. Au revoir! (*He goes out by the terrace.*)

MISS M. (*with a burst of anger*). A woman! I heard his servant tell him it was a woman! And not five minutes since he declared he came to Trinidad only for *me*! (*She touches a bell on the table. PHŒBE appears at the side entrance on the right.*) My hat and cloak!

PHŒBE. Going out, Miss, at this time of night?

MISS M. My hat and cloak, I tell you! (*PHŒBE goes out.*) I'll discover who this mysterious "woman" is before I let the Count see me to-morrow. If I go out that way (*looking towards the left entrance*), I can follow him without a living soul to notice me. Phœbe!

PHŒBE (*reappearing with the hat and cloak*). Yes, Miss! (*She puts the cloak on Miss M.*) Am I to sit up till you come back, miss?

(*WESTCRAFT appears on the terrace, unseen both by MISS M. and PHŒBE.*)

MISS M. Yes—sit up for me.

(*She hurries out on the left. PHŒBE crosses to leave the room by the right.*

WESTCRAFT comes down on the left, behind her.)

WEST. Going out? Alone? At past midnight? By Heaven, the Frenchman's at the bottom of this! They shall find one more than they reckon on, meet where they may!

(*He goes out on the left. The scene closes in.*)

SECOND SCENE.—*Moonlight. A glade in Miss MILBURN'S grounds. Entrances on either side. MICHAELMAS and MR. PLATO enter on the right, followed by a negro. The negro squats on the ground at MICHAELMAS'S right, and falls asleep.*

MR. PLATO. Well, sar, is de Count coming or not?

MICH. He is coming directly. We will wait for him here, if you please.

MR. PLATO. I consider it a pleasure, sar, to wait anywhere along wid you.

MICH. Your polite attention quite overwhelms me. May I have the honour of knowing your name?

MR. PLATO. (*giving MICHAELMAS several visiting cards*). I present my compliments, sar, and offer you my card. Also de cards of my distinguished friends. You are an object of interest, sar, to de black society ob dis place.

MICH. Proud to hear it, I'm sure (*reading the cards*). Mr. Plato.

MR. PLATO. Dat's me, sar!

MICH. (*bowing*). I congratulate you on your name, sir.

MR. PLATO (*bowing*). Pretty good name, sar, as you say.

MICH. (*reading the cards*). Mr. Socrates; Mr. Homer; Mr. Virgil; Mr. Shakespeare; Mr. Milton. (*To MR. PLATO.*) All black, sir?

MR. PLATO. All black, sar.

MICH. (*aside*). Curious! They were all white when I last heard of them. (*To MR. P.*). May I ask how you six black gentlemen came by the names of Plato, Socrates, Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, and Milton?

MR. PLATO. We took 'em, sar.

MICH. With any particular object in view?

MR. PLATO. Wid a berry particular object in view, sar! Saving your presence, we don't see why de dam white man should hab all de 'lustrious names to himself!

MICH. Quite unanswerable! Still, my modesty tells me that *my* name is not illustrious. What have *I* done to deserve this distinguished reception?

MR. PLATO. What did you do, sar, when you were here last time ?

MICH. Do ? I saw my estate—I mortgaged my estate—I ran away from my estate. And now my estate returns the compliment, and runs away from *me*. It is to be sold to-morrow, Mr. Plato, for the benefit of the mortgagees.

MR. PLATO. Answer me dis, sar. When you were here last time, did you ebber try to teach your niggers anything ?

MICH. Never !

MR. PLATO. Did you ebber ask your niggers to do a day's work ?

MICH. Never !

MR. PLATO. Dere is de secret, sar, ob de high opinion entertained ob you by black society. You hab left de brains ob de nigger asleep in his head, and de hands ob de nigger undisturbed in his pockets. You good man, Cot bless you ! I offer you my hand !

MICH. (*shaking hands*). Long may ignorance flourish, Mr. Plato ! and soon may idleness be recognised as the fit employment of human time ! Talking of idleness (*he looks at the negro*), who is this slumbering black gentleman, on the right hand side of me ?

MR. PLATO. Dat is my secretary, sar. De young man is waiting for his orders before he goes to bed. I am quite oberwhelmed, Misser Michaelmas, by de black business ob dis island. De white people won't hab it all deir own way much longer.

MICH. Aye ? aye ? Bad feeling, eh, between the blacks and the whites ?

MR. PLATO. Bitter bad feeling, sar. We hab two political parties in dis island.

MICH. So have we, Mr. Plato, in our island.

MR. PLATO. Sorry for you, sar. We hab de Conservative blacks, and de Liberal blacks.

MICH. What an extraordinary coincidence ! We have the Conservative whites and the Liberal whites. May I ask what your political objects are ?

MR. PLATO. We hab but one object, sar—de sacred right ob freedom. And we hab two ways ob getting at it.

De Liberal way is de easiest, I admit. De Liberal way is to get up early one morning, and kill all de whites.

MICH. Come! There's a Liberal programme that one can understand, at any rate!

MR. PLATO. De Conservative way——

MICH. Are *you* a Conservative, Mr. Plato?

MR. PLATO. I am de Conservative chief, sar!

MICH. Speaking as a white man, I am sincerely rejoiced to hear it. Go on, pray.

MR. PLATO. De Conservative way is de most peaceable and de most proper. De Conservative way is to found a nigger club. Little by little, sar, dis club will unite all de blacks in one great conspiracy to learn no lessons, and to do no work. What is de necessary consequence? De dam white man (saving your presence) leaves de island.

MICH. Is the Club founded yet, Mr. Plato? If it is, I shall be glad to set the example of leaving the Island immediately.

MR. PLATO. No, sar. De foundation ob de Club is fixed for to-morrow night—and de name ob it is de Tick-Skulled Club.

MICH. The Thick-Skulled Club! Why, your bitterest enemies couldn't have hit on a better name for you than that!

MR. PLATO. Dere is a reason for de name, sar. Answer me dis. What is de most honourable part ob a man? De most honourable part is his head. Berry well. De ticker his head is, de more he hab ob de honourable part. And dere you hab de name ob de Tick-Skulled Club! (*Calling to the NEGRO.*) Misser Secretary! Step dis way. (*The NEGRO starts up.*) Misser Michaelmas, I present my compliments, and beg you will excuse me!

MICH. Mr. Plato, I present *my* compliments, and beg you won't mention it.

MR. PLATO (*to the NEGRO, who crosses to him*). You hab your orders for de foundation day ob de Club? First, a band of music—two fifes and a drum.

THE NEGRO. Iss, massa.

MR. PLATO. Second:—A banner, wid de crest ob de

Club—a tick skull—and de motto ob de Club :—" Dam all education, and down wid all work."

THE NEGRO. Iss, massa.

MR. PLATO. Tird :—De refreshments for de six Committee-men ob de Club. Dat is to say—six bottles ob rum punch, six corkscrews, and six glasses, carried by de committee demselves. Also, six cool chairs, for de committee to sit on, carried by de grateful public.

THE NEGRO. Iss, massa.

MR. PLATO. Berry good. Dat is all. Misser Secretary, Cot bless you. You may go to bed. (*The NEGRO goes out, on the left.* MR. PLATO turns to MICHAELMAS.) Misser Michaelmas, dere is one ting I mush regret. I can't possimply ask you to witness de foundation ob de Tick-Skulled Club. You are de model white man, sar, ob dis island. Still you *are* white—and dat's a fatal objection in black society.

MICH. Naturally, Mr. Plato ! Besides, there may be one or two Liberals present at your Conservative meeting—and the consequences might be serious to a person of my unfortunate colour. (*He looks off on the right.*) The night is getting on. Where can my master be ?

MAUR. (*speaking outside*). Michaelmas ! where are you ?

MICH. This way, sir !

(*Enter MAURICE.*)

MAUR. Why didn't you keep nearer to the house ? I have been looking for you everywhere. (*Noticing Mr. PLATO.*) Who is that man ?

MR. PLATO. I present my compliments, sar. I am Mr. Plato—odderwise known as de Conservative chief.

MICH. (*aside to MAURICE*). The woman who wants to see you, lives in a hut near here, sir ; and the man is waiting—at her request—to show you the way.

MAUR. Once more, Michaelmas, are you sure that I am the person whom she wants to see ?

MICH. Quite sure, sir—or I should never have carried her message.

MAUR. Strange—to say the least of it ! (To MR. PLATO.) Is it far from here ?

MR. PLATO. Only a few minutes' walk, sar. Do you present your compliments, and request me to lead de way ?

MAUR. (*satirically*). With a thousand apologies for troubling you !

MR. PLATO (*bowing*). Wid a tousand tanks, sar, for de honour you do me ! (*Aside.*) No dam white man in dis island shall be more polite dan I am !

(*He goes out, left.*)

MAUR. (*to MICHAELMAS*). What is the woman's name ?

MICH. Ruth, sir.

MAUR. A perfect stranger, I suppose ?

MICH. A perfect stranger, sir.

MAUR. I never was more puzzled in my life. Are you coming with me ?

MICH. If you will allow me, sir, I'll see you safe as far as the hut.

MAUR. Come along, then !

(*They go out on the left. WESTCRAFT appears on the right ; pauses a moment, looking after them ; then follows them out. The Scene changes.*)

THIRD SCENE.—*The Interior of RUTH'S Hut. The walls are whitewashed—the wattles of which they are made showing through, in places. The rafters of the slanting roof are crossed with bamboo, and thatched with leaves. A light trap-door (closed at the opening of the scene) is in the roof to admit the air. A bed, a table, and a few wicker-work chairs, compose all the furniture of the room. There are two entrances—one leading into the hut from the plantation ; the other (screened by a piece of coarse canvas) leading into a second room. RUTH is discovered lying, dressed, on her bed. A NEGRESS sits at the foot of the bed. The moonlight streams in over the bed, from a fissure in the left wall of the hut.*

RUTH. The time passes—and still he doesn't come.

(*To the NEGRESS.*) Look for him, my dear—look for him again!

(*The NEGRESS rises. At the same moment, the door leading into the plantation is opened. MAURICE appears on the threshold, with PLATO and MICHAELMAS.*)

MR. PLATO (*leading the way in*). Dis is Ruth's hut, sar!

RUTH. Is he there?

MAUR. (*advancing*). Are you speaking to me?

RUTH. Yes! yes! come in!

MICH. Shall I wait outside, sir?

MAUR. Quite needless. There is evidently some mistake here—and one word from me will set it right. Go back to the hotel, and wait for me there.

(*He dismisses MICHAELMAS and PLATO by a sign. They go out. The NEGRESS follows them, closing the door behind her. MAURICE advances to the bedside.*)

MAUR. (*gently*). Look at me. Is it true that I am the person you wished to see?

RUTH. Yes.

MAUR. Do you know my name?

RUTH. Your name is Maurice de Layrac. (MAURICE starts.) Will you move the lamp a little nearer? (MAURICE does so.) Will you sit there? (MAURICE, after a moment's hesitation, seats himself in the chair previously occupied by the NEGRESS. RUTH raises herself in the bed and looks at him earnestly.) What brought you to Trinidad?

MAUR. What interest can you have in asking the question? It's absurd to let this go any farther. (*To RUTH.*) I have no wish to speak to you harshly. I see you are struck down by illness——

RUTH. I am struck down by the shock of seeing you—here, in this accursed island!

MAUR. (*aside*). The poor creature evidently takes me for somebody else! (*He looks about him.*) There was a woman here, when I came in.

RUTH. Answer me this, you have come to Trinidad. Are you here of your own free will?

MAUR. Yes! yes!—Try to explain yourself. Try to say plainly what it is you want with me.

RUTH. I want you to look back into your own mind. I want you to tell me what is the first thing you remember—the first, first thing in your life. (MAURICE *looks away from her in despair of understanding what she means.*) Oh look at me! Your face is handsome—your face is kind. Please, please look at me!

MAUR. (*humouring her*). What is the first thing I remember? I remember being on board a ship, with my father and mother.

RUTH. My memory goes back farther than yours—back to the time when the Count de Layrac adopted you for his son.

MAUR. Adopted me?

RUTH. Adopted you.

MAUR. I am *not* the son of the Count and Countess de Layrac?

RUTH. You are *not* their son.

MAUR. She's mad!

RUTH. Wait, and hear me! Your presence in this island forces the truth from my lips—and I tell it. The Count and Countess are both dead.

MAUR. Yes?

RUTH. They left you with a guardian till you came of age.

MAUR. You certainly know the truth, so far.

RUTH. When you have spoken to your guardian about your father and mother—as you call them—has he ever surprised you by changing the subject?

MAUR. (*with sudden consternation*). Over and over again!

RUTH. Have the family papers and the law-papers been obstinately kept secret from you?

MAUR. Good Heavens! Yes!

RUTH. Am I mad, now?

MAUR. For God's sake, don't keep me in suspense! Tell me the whole truth—if truth it is. My father——

RUTH. Your father was a planter in this island.

MAUR. His name?

RUTH. Brentwood.

MAUR. Living?

RUTH. Dead—before you were born. His wife——

MAUR. My mother?

RUTH. Not your mother. His wife——

MAUR. Who *was* my mother?

RUTH. A slave-girl on your father's estate.

MAUR. (*turning away his head*). The one dream of my life has been to live worthy of my birth. Oh me—to what a reality I have awakened, if this woman speaks the truth! (*He turns again to RUTH.*) Is my mother living?

RUTH (*faintly*). Do you blame her, sir?

MAUR. God forbid!

RUTH. You are not ashamed of her?

MAUR. Be she who she may, my mother is sacred to me! She *is* living—or you would never have asked that question. Where is she? where is she?

RUTH (*shrinking back*). Oh! *don't* look at me! *don't* look at me!

MAUR. You *asked* me to look at you, a moment since! (*The truth suddenly flashes on him. He starts to his feet, with a cry. The next moment he falls on his knees at the bedside, and opens his arms.*) Oh, my mother, kiss me! oh, my mother, bless me!

RUTH. My son! my son!

(*She clasps her arms round him—her head sinks on his shoulder. There is a pause of silence. In that interval, a faint rustling is heard on the leafy thatch of the roof. WEST-CRAFT is seen on the roof, opening the trap-door. The moonlight streams in. He approaches the opening, so as to face the audience, and looks in through it.*)

WEST. The light is dim. I can barely see—but I can hear! I can hear!

(*He remains crouching on the roof, in sight of the audience.*)

MAUR. (*rising to his feet*). Is there something moving outside?

RUTH. The night wind comes down from the mountains, Maurice—and the loose leaves of the thatch feel it as it passes over them.

MAUR. One moment! Let me look, and be sure.

(*He goes to the door leading into the plantation, opens it, and looks out. At the same time, the canvas screen over the second door is drawn aside. MISS MILBURN appears in the doorway. She is not seen by the persons on the stage.*)

MISS M. (*speaking to herself, in a whisper*). Has he gone? What could have brought him to Ruth's hut?

(*She pauses, sees MAURICE coming back, and remains in the doorway.*)

MAUR. (*returning to the bedside*). I can see no living creature. I can hear nothing but the wind.

RUTH. Come nearer to me. I have not said what I wanted to say to you, yet.

MAUR. No! no! you are so weak, mother. (*Miss M. starts, and listens eagerly.*) No more to-night.

RUTH. My time is short. Listen! listen! Your father tried to write to me in his last illness—and his jealous wife destroyed the letters. Your father tried to send messages to me—and his jealous wife stopped the messengers at the door. He had something to say to me on his deathbed; and—thanks to Mrs. Brentwood—he never said it.

MAUR. Go on! go on!

RUTH. His will left all he had—his lands and his slaves—to his widow. Mrs. Brentwood hated *me*—I don't complain; I deserved it. But she hated *you*, who had never done her wrong. She waited to let me feel her vengeance, Maurice, till you were born. And then she sold me to the highest bidder in the market-place—sold me with my infant child!

MAUR. Horrible! horrible!

RUTH. They say she repented of it afterwards—when her time came to die. She owned that she had wronged

me. She had destroyed a letter which her husband left to be given to me after his death. But she hadn't destroyed everything! A pocket-book belonging to her husband was found among her papers. My name was written in one of the entries; and mention was made of a duplicate letter, which Mr. Brentwood had hidden—the copy, I suspect, of the letter which his wife destroyed.

MAUR. Where is that copy?

RUTH. No living creature knows!

MAUR. Can't it be found?

RUTH. Look under my pillow—and you will find the pocket-book, with the entry in your father's handwriting. Judge for yourself.

MAUR. (*reading in the pocket-book*). "Duplicate letter to Ruth safely hidden. Clue to the hiding-place——" (*He stops.*) I don't understand the words that follow. Can you explain them?

RUTH. No more than you can. The meaning of the clue died with Mr. Brentwood's death. Keep the pocket-book—it proves that your father did not forget me on his deathbed, if it proves nothing else. What else was it I had to say? (*She suddenly recovers the lost thought.*) Ah! I know what it was! The Count and Countess were on a visit here, Maurice, when they adopted you. They saw you and me in the plantation—and they took a fancy to you. They promised to treat my child like their own son. I had to choose between parting with you, and letting you grow up on the plantation among the slaves.

MAUR. Yes! yes!

RUTH. It broke my heart—but I parted with you. They took you away by stealth. Did I tell you—when I was sold in the market place, I was sold with my child?

MAUR. You told me!

RUTH (*more and more excitedly*). They went—the French gentleman and his wife went away with you secretly in a ship bound to England. They took you to England first.

MAUR. God bless and reward them! They took me to a free country—they made me citizen of a great nation. Mother! on the day when I set foot on the soil of England, I was free!

RUTH (*rising on the bed*). Son! on the day when you set foot again on the soil of this island, the laws of free England deserted you. The master who bought you, can claim you again.

MAUR. Impossible!

RUTH (*wildly*). Fly, while you have the chance!

MAUR. Leave you? Never!

RUTH (*in a frenzy of terror*). My son! my son! while you stand there by your mother's bedside, do you know what you are? Maurice! Maurice! Maurice! you are a slave! (*She sinks back.*)

MAUR. (*bending over her*). She has fainted! (*He raises her in his arms.*) Mother!—oh, God! her eyes are lifeless; her heart is still. Dead! (*He lays her gently back on the pillow, and bends over her in speechless grief.*)

MISS M. (*at the door, looking at him with a gesture of despair*). A slave!

WEST. (*on the roof, looking at him with a gesture of triumph*). A slave!

THE END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

FIRST SCENE.—*The same as the First Scene of the First Act, except that the lighting is to represent daylight, on this occasion. PHOEBE appears, opening the conservatory door in the centre. MAURICE enters. He carries a cane in his hand, which he lays aside on a table, after he has come in.*

MAUR. Miss Milburn expects me this morning. Will you let her know that I am here?

PHOEBE. Yes, sir.

(She goes out by the side entrance, on the right.)

MAUR. The sun shines brightly; the sounds of day are abroad in the air; my weary eyes rest on the beauty and the luxury of this room—and still my mind sees nothing but the ghastly moonlight and the squalid hut; my ears are deaf to all but my mother's dying words. *(He looks towards the side entrance.)* Oh, you whom I love, come, with your soft footfall and your gentle smile! Emily! Emily! give me the courage to tell you what I heard last night!

(Enter MISS MILBURN, by the side entrance on the right. She is pale and agitated—and shows plainly the effort that she is making to control herself.)

MISS M. *(giving MAURICE her hand, after a momentary hesitation).* I have not kept you waiting, I hope?

MAUR. *(embarrassed on his side).* You did me the honour, last night, to permit me to call.

MISS M. Yes—I remember.

MAUR. Pardon me—you are not looking like your usual self—are you ill?

MISS M. I am not very well, this morning.

MAUR. Let me get you a chair!

MISS M. (*seating herself on the sofa*). Thank you—I'll sit here. I think—if you will be so kind?—you will find my smelling-bottle on the table at the back.

MAUR. Yes! yes!

MISS M. (*to herself, while MAURICE is looking for the smelling-bottle*). The tears rise in his eyes when he looks at me. He has come here to tell me the truth! Can I own that I know it already? Never! never! (*MAURICE returns to her with the smelling-bottle*.) Thank you, once more! I really want it—I am a little nervous this morning. Won't you take a chair?

MAUR. (*placing himself at a little distance from the sofa*). When we parted yesterday evening, I had many things to say to you——

MISS M. Yes?

MAUR. I might have said them easily, then. It is not easy to say them, now. Something has happened—— (*He hesitates*.) I am afraid I am disturbing you? I am afraid you are not well enough to receive visitors to-day?

MISS M. I am only a little fatigued, after the exertions of last night. (*A pause. Miss M. attempts to change the subject*.) Did you walk here, this morning, from the hotel?

MAUR. Yes.

MISS M. What did you think of the island by daylight?

MAUR. I thought it very beautiful.

MISS M. The views, inland, will interest you—if you like mountain scenery.

MAUR. I shall see the views, I hope. (*Another pause. MAURICE approaches her*.) You were so good as to let my servant speak to me here, last night. He brought me a message from a person whom I believed to be a stranger. Emily——! (*MISS MILBURN half rises from the sofa, and looks at him*.) Have I offended you?

MISS M. No! no! (*Aside*.) Oh, my heart! my heart! how it clings to him!

MAUR. Emily! will you hear me, as no other woman could hear me? Will you feel for me, as no other woman could feel?

(*He takes her hand*.)

MISS M. (*struggling with herself*). Let go of my hand!

MAUR. (*keeping her hand*). One moment! leave it one little moment longer in mine! Suppose—try to suppose that affliction has fallen on me, that misfortune has struck me out of my place in the world. Have I a place in your heart? In the lowest deep of misery, can I look up and say to myself—"I am still the same man to *her*?"

MISS M. (*trying to release herself*). Maurice! oh, Maurice! for pity's sake——!

MAUR. (*bitterly*). Pity? No creature living needs pity as I need it! In the dread of losing you, I sin against my honour. I shrink basely from the truth. The words which I am bound to speak, die on my lips. The words which I have no right to utter, force their way to you in spite of me. Emily! drive me from your presence—I am unworthy of you! Emily! come to my heart—I love you! (*He clasps his arms round her. In a momentary self-forgetfulness, her head sinks on his bosom, and she returns the embrace.*) My angel, look up at me! My heart's darling! let me see your love in your eyes—let me find it on your lips!

MISS M. (*looking up*). My own Maurice! (*He stoops and kisses her. The action causes an instantaneous revulsion of feeling in her. She sees the position in its true light—and breaks away from him, with a cry of horror.*) What have I done? Am I mad? (*She covers her face with her hands.*) Oh, the shame of it! the shame of it!

MAUR. (*repeating the words*). The shame of it? (*He advances a step.*) What do you mean?

MISS M. (*with a sudden outburst of anger*). Stir a step nearer to me—and my servants shall turn you out of the house! Have you no mercy for my weakness? Have you no respect for a defenceless woman? Is nothing sacred to you? He looks at me! he looks at me as if *I* had insulted him! I deserve it. Bitter as it is to bear, I deserve it.

MAUR. (*very calmly and slowly*). What do you deserve? And why is it so bitter to bear?

MISS M. *You ask me that question?*

MAUR. (*as before*). I ask it.

MISS M. (*losing all control over herself*). In this island,

sir, a lady is degraded if a slave's hand touches her. A slave's lips have touched mine!

MAUR. (*with a sudden outburst of passion*). You were in the hut last night? You heard——?

MISS M. I heard all!

MAUR. (*suddenly controlling himself, and kneeling at her feet.*) Miss Milburn, you have brought me to my senses. I ask your pardon—humbly, on my knee, as a slave should. (*He rises.*) There is but one atonement that I can make. You shall see me no more.

(*He pauses, and looks his last at her—
then turns to go. Another change
takes place in MISS MILBURN; the
tenderer feeling rises uppermost again.
She abruptly places herself between
MAURICE and the door.*)

MISS M. Maurice! Not with that look! don't leave me with that look! (*His head sinks on his breast; he waits in silence.*) Oh God! I have crushed his spirit; I have broken his heart! Maurice, dear Maurice, I never meant what I said. I was mad with myself—I was mad with you. (*She seizes his hand.*) Say you forgive me, Maurice.

MAUR. Willingly! gratefully! With my heart of hearts!

MISS M. I am not the wretch you must think me. I'm only a woman—I don't know what I say. (*She looks at him, and shrinks back.*) Oh, that broken look! that dreadful, dreadful despair! Maurice, my heart bleeds for you. Say something angry—say something hard to me—help me against myself. Oh, Maurice! Maurice! you know I love you!

MAUR. I will remember it, Emily, when the ocean rolls between us. For your dear sake, I will forget it now!

(*He moves away, as if to leave her.*)

MISS M. Not yet! Give me time to think. Oh, don't be as cruel to me as I have been to you! Wait!—I implore you, Maurice—wait till I come back!

(*She bursts into tears, and leaves him—
hurrying out on the right.*)

MAUR. (*looking after her*). What a woman I have loved! What a woman I have lost! Wait for her? To what purpose? It can end but in one way. Let me spare her the misery of the last farewell. (*He turns away.*) My life is ended. And yet, I live, I move, I breathe! (*With a bitter laugh.*) What am I surprised at? The slave-blood runs in my veins—the slave nature can bear anything. (*He takes his hat and cane, and looks once more at the door by which Miss M. has left him.*) My first—last—love, farewell! farewell for ever!

(*He turns to go out, and is stopped by the appearance of WESTCRAFT at the centre door.*)

WEST. (*entering the room with his hat on*). You here again? Once for all, Mr. Frenchman, one of us is one too many in this house. I'm in my right place here; and you're not.

MAUR. (*with a sudden change to irony*). You are in your right place here? Why, if you please?

WEST. I am engaged to be married to Miss Milburn—that's why.

MAUR. You!!! (*He bursts out laughing.*) Mr. Planter! as we say in France, you are *impayable*.

WEST. Keep your foreign gibberish to yourself.

MAUR. My foreign gibberish? Your education has been neglected, sir. One gentleman doesn't speak to another in that rough manner, and with that rude voice. Try again!

WEST. Keep a civil tongue in your head. You had better not try my patience too far, I can tell you!

MAUR. Oh, this is worse and worse! My poor island savage, it's quite a providence that I have come here to teach you. Unhappy man! he has learnt nothing—he doesn't even know how to enter a room!

WEST. Are you mad? or drunk?

MAUR. First lesson, Mr. Planter! When you meet with a gentleman in a lady's house, take your hat off! I have got *my* hat in my hand. You won't take *your's* off? No! (*A pause. He strikes WESTCRAFT's hat off with his cane. WESTCRAFT rushes at him. MAURICE flings away*

the cane and stops him with his open hand.) Lay a finger on me—and I'll strangle you where you stand.

(WESTCRAFT hesitates, daunted by his look and manner. WOLF appears at the centre door.)

WOLF *(to WESTCRAFT)*. Is the carriage to wait, sir?

MAUR. *(interrupting WESTCRAFT, who is about to reply to WOLF)*. A second lesson for you! Keep this from Miss Milburn's knowledge—and send your seconds to me at the hotel. I'll wait for them for an hour from this time.

(He bows to WESTCRAFT, addressing him once more as "Mr. Planter!" and goes out, leaving his cane on the floor.)

WEST. *(addressing WOLF, after a moment's reflection, and pointing to MAURICE's cane)*. Pick up that cane—and wait in the market-place till I come.

SECOND SCENE.—*A room at the hotel. Entrances right and left. MAURICE enters thoughtfully by the left hand.*

MAUR. *(reflecting)*. My last instructions are written. I have provided for my faithful servant. If I fall, in the duel with Westcraft—all is done. If I live—— *(He considers for a moment, and takes out the pocket-book given to him by his mother.)* If I live, there is one thing more. *(He calls off, on the right.)* Michaelmas! *(MICHAELMAS appears at the right.)* I have a friendly service to ask of you. Give me your hand. *(MICHAELMAS hesitates.)* Why do you hesitate? Have you forgotten what I told you, when you ventured back to the hut last night?

MICH. I wish I *could* forget it, sir!

MAUR. When my mother was sold, with me in her arms—who bought us? The relative who left you your estate in this island. In France, I was your master. In

Trinidad, I am your slave. If you give me your hand, it's *I* who am honoured—not you!

MICH. (*with suppressed feeling.*) I ask your pardon, sir! Speak of *me* as you like—but don't speak of yourself in that bitter way. Here, and everywhere, you know what I am. I'm the grateful servant of the best master that ever man had!

MAUR. (*taking his hand*). Compose yourself, my poor fellow! I have something here (*showing the pocket-book*) that I want to consult you about.

MICH. (*controlling himself*). I'll keep it down, sir! I know it's unworthy of a well-trained servant like me, to let his feelings get the better of him out of the pantry. (*Wiping his eyes.*) When I was a boy under a butler, I should have had my head punched for this—and have deserved it too!

MAUR. Are you able to listen to me? There is a blank, Michaelmas, in my poor mother's story. It is just possible that your exertions may be able to fill it up.—I told you what happened during my father's last illness, did I not?

MICH. Yes, sir. He tried to communicate with your mother; and his wife prevented it. He left a letter to be given to your mother, after his death——

MAUR. And his wife destroyed it. There is a copy of that letter in existence, Michaelmas—mentioned by my father himself. It has never been found yet. It must be found now.

MICH. Lost, sir?

MAUR. Hidden.

MICH. By your father?

MAUR. Yes. Here is the clue to the hiding-place in my father's own handwriting. Read that entry. (*He opens the pocket-book, and gives it to MICHAELMAS.*)

MICH. (*reading*). "Duplicate letter to Ruth, safely hidden. Clue to the hiding-place;—The old Wing: my room: Six along, and Three across." It's not easy, sir, for a stranger to the circumstances, to know what that means.

MAUR. It's all but hopeless. Still, the attempt must be made. Something which was once of importance to my

mother—which may still be of importance to me—lies concealed in that hiding-place! I am sure I am right. Why else, should my father have copied his letter? Why else, should he have hidden the copy in distrust of his jealous wife?

MICH. Only tell me, sir—how can I help you?

MAUR. In this way. Some of the people who were about my father, at the time of his death, may be still living, and may be able to assist us in interpreting that clue. You have been well received by the negroes of this island——

MICH. And I may make inquiries among them? I can begin my inquiries this very day.

MAUR. Indeed?

MICH. I have an appointment—with your leave, sir—to meet Mr. Plato in the market-place, and see the sights of the town. If I find him able to help me, am I free to act on any information I receive?

MAUR. Quite free.

MICH. (*aside*). Thank God, I have got something to do for my slave. I begin to feel as if he was my master again! (*To MAURICE.*) Where shall I find you, sir, when I get back?

MAUR. Inquire here—and they will tell you.

MICH. (*holding out the pocket-book*). May I keep this to guide me? (*MAURICE makes a sign in the affirmative.*) I wish you respectfully good morning sir.

MAUR. Stop! one question before you go. Have you provided for my mother's burial?

MICH. I am ashamed to say, sir, I have done nothing.

MAUR. You know that if I stir in it openly, I expose myself to suspicion of my slave origin. You know that I have no friend here, whom I can trust to help me but you. And yet, you have done nothing!

MICH. I am not to blame, sir. The burial of your mother has been provided for by another person.

MAUR. What other person?

MICH. I can't discover. I can't even guess who could be interested in the matter besides you and me.

MAUR. (*to himself*). I can! Emily! I mustn't think of her! I mustn't think of her!

MICH. (*looking off on the right.*) I beg your pardon, sir, do you expect a visitor? There is some one coming up-stairs.

MAUR. (*aside*). One of Westcraft's seconds, no doubt! (*To MICHAELMAS.*) Let the visitor come in.

(*WOLF appears at the left entrance.*)

WOLF. Count de Layrac?

MAUR. That is my name. You are Mr. Westcraft's servant—are you not?

WOLF. I am Mr. Westcraft's slave.

MAUR. (*aside*). I expect his seconds—and he sends me his slave! (*To WOLF.*) What is your business here?

WOLF. To take you to the market-place.

MICH. How dare you speak to the Count in that way?

MAUR. Michaelmas!

MICH. I ask your pardon, sir. The impudence of that yellow-faced savage is enough to provoke the patience of a saint.

MAUR. Keep your appointment with your negro-friend—and leave me to deal with this man. Go. (*MICHAELMAS bows—looks hard at WOLF—and goes out on the left. MAURICE continues to WOLF.*) Are you sent to me with a message from your master?

WOLF. Yes. A message about your cane.

MAUR. My cane? True. I left it at Miss Milburn's. Where is my cane?

WOLF. Waiting for you in the market-place.

MAUR. Again! Is this insolence of your's assumed? or do you know no better? I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. You know no better.

WOLF. Thank you.

MAUR. Answer my next question civilly—if you can. Are you acting under your master's instructions—Yes? or No?

WOLF. Yes.

MAUR. Your master told you to say to me, what you said just now?

WOLF. Yes.

MAUR. (*to himself*). Mr. Westcraft wants another lesson in good manners. Mr. Westcraft shall have it! (*To WOLF.*) Where shall I find your master?

WOLF. Where you will find your cane.

MAUR. You shall feel my cane on your back.

(He goes out on the right.)

WOLF *(following him)*. Shall I?

(The Scene changes.)

THIRD SCENE.—*The market-place. A sunny, lively scene. Buying and selling going on at the stalls. A crowd of whites and blacks of all orders; gathered principally at the back of the stage. Among the whites are several Spanish women in gay dresses—wearing their mantillas. The sea is seen at intervals through the buildings in the distance. Upper and lower entrances, both on the right and the left.*

A MARKET-WOMAN. Birds! birds! fine birds! Quails, snipes, plovers, pigeons, doves!

A MARKET-MAN. Land turtle! sea turtle! Fresh meat! salt meat! Come, buy! buy! buy!

A SECOND MARKET-WOMAN. Pineapples, shaddocks, plantains, bananas, cocoa-nuts, yams. Come, buy! buy! buy!

A SECOND MARKET-MAN. Fish! fresh fish! Jew-fish, hog-fish, mud-fish, snappers, god-dammies, groupas, and grunts!

(Purchasers gather round the stalls, and bargain. WESTCRAFT appears from the upper entrance on the left, pushing his way through the crowd. He comes down to the front, followed by a slave, and carrying MAURICE'S cane in his hand.)

WEST. The hour is nearly up—and no signs of the Frenchman yet. *(To the Slave.)* Look along the road; and tell me if you see anything of Wolf and the Count. *(The Slave goes to the upper entrance on the right.)* If Miss Milburn thinks that I will submit to be thrown over for another man—Miss Milburn shall find out her mistake.

And, what's more, if her walk brings her to the market-place this morning, she shall find it out—here. (*Looking round impatiently.*) No signs of them yet! Has Wolf failed to find him?

(*He returns to the back of the stage, and is lost to view among the crowd on the right. At the same time, MISS MILBURN enters hurriedly by the lower entrance on the left.*)

MISS M. Where can Maurice be? Surely, he went back this way? I must, and will, see him! That dreadful, broken look when I left him, pursues me, go where I may. (*MICHAELMAS enters by the lower entrance on the right.*) Michaelmas! The very person to help me. Where is your master?

MICH. I left him at the hotel, Miss.

MISS M. Was he alone?

MICH. No, Miss. Mr. Westcraft's mulatto slave was with him.

MISS M. Westcraft's slave with him? What business can he have with Westcraft? Is the Count still at the hotel, do you think?

MICH. It's doubtful, Miss. Shall I go back and see?

MISS M. Wait a minute. (*Aside.*) He may question his servant—he may make some excuse to avoid seeing me again. My only chance is to take him by surprise. (*To MICHAELMAS.*) No—never mind! I'll go to the hotel myself. (*She stops.*) Suppose he should be gone to Westcraft's? The slave must have been at the hotel with some message from his master?

MICH. Likely enough, Miss.

MISS M. Westcraft's house is nearer than the hotel—I'll try that first. I'll even see Westcraft himself, if necessary. Anything to undo the mischief I have done. Thank you, Michaelmas—thank you!

(*She turns back, and hurries out on the left.*)

MICH. (*looking after her.*) Is there something wrong, I wonder? The young lady seems in twenty different minds, all in a minute. In the time when I was a gentleman, I might have asked what was the matter. Being only a servant, I hold my tongue, and attend to my

business. (*He takes out the pocket-book which MAURICE has given to him.*) Let's have another look at this puzzle before Mr. Plato joins me. (*He reads.*) "Duplicate letter to Ruth safely hidden. Clue to the hiding-place: The old Wing."—What does that mean, I wonder? "My room."—One may safely guess that to be the room he slept in. "Six along, and Three across."—There's the thick of the mystery, in those last words. Call it the measurement of something. Say the measurement in feet? That might be the size of a box. Say the measurement in yards? That might be the size of his room. Who is to settle which it is? (*MR. PLATO enters by the upper entrance on the left. MICHAELMAS sees him, and calls to him.*) This way, Mr. Plato! Here I am.

MR. PLATO. Hab I kept you waiting, sar? De dam black business ob dis island is to blame for it! Dese poor helpless people hab no mussy on de time ob a public man like me.

MICH. Is the time of a public man in this island pretty well paid, Mr. Plato?

MR. PLATO. Paid? Him's not paid at all! Misser Michaelmas, I blush to own it—in dis dirty little English colony, virtue is it's own reward. Dey leave me wid noting, sar, but de voice ob my own approving conscience!

MICH. (*aside*). He'll take money!—I see my way to making some use of him.

MR. PLATO. What de debbel's de good ob your own approving conscience? Can you eat it? can you drink it? Will it find you in clothes? will it cover you up warm at night? Yah! I'm sick ob my own approving conscience! Come and see de public institutions, Misser Michaelmas. We'll take dem in deir order as dey stand.

MICH. Which is the nearest of them, Mr. Plato?

MR. PLATO. Which is de nearest? Wherebber de flag ob England floats, sar, what is de nearest ob all English institutions? De grog-shop round de corner.

MICH. Stop a minute! Before I see the nearest institution, I have got a little business to do on my own account. I want some information, relating to a planter who died here many years since. His name was Brentwood. Did you ever hear of him?

MR. PLATO. Hear ob him? I was brought up, sar, on Misser Brentwood's plantation.

MICH. The deuce you were! I have a few inquiries to make about the late Mr. Brentwood. Mere idle curiosity, Mr. Plato!

MR. PLATO (*with sudden dignity*). I nebber encourage idle curiosity, sar—I hab a moral objection to it. Cood morning!

MICH. (*aside*.) He wishes me "Good morning!"—and he doesn't go. I understand! (*To MR. PLATO*.) Have you a moral objection to take a sovereign?

MR. PLATO (*with sudden interest*). What's dat you say, sar?

MICH. Have you a moral objection to take a sovereign?

MR. PLATO. Not if you put it into my pocket, sar, when I happen to be looking de odder way. Shall I look de odder way now?

MICH. I'll tell you when, Mr. Plato. I'll pay, as you answer—say, in instalments of a crown at a time. Is the house Mr. Brentwood died in, still standing?

MR. PLATO. Yes, sar.

MICH. Look the other way, Mr. Plato.

MR. PLATO (*with assumed indifference*). Dis is a most beautiful day, sar. I find de air berry nice and refreshing.

MICH. (*slipping the first crown piece into his pocket*). Is the house far from here?

MR. PLATO. A good long step from here, sar—by de coast-road to de north.

MICH. Is anybody living there now?

MR. PLATO. De present owner is living in de new wing, sar.

MICH. The new wing! (*He refers to the pocket-book*.) "The old Wing," mentioned here, is plainly the old wing of the house. There's one of the mysteries cleared up already!—Mr. Plato! you're looking the other way, I think?

MR. PLATO (*innocently*). I tink not, sar.

MICH. Excuse me—I think you are.

MR. PLATO. A man sometimes looks de odder way, sar, widout remarking it himself. Hab you noticed dat?

MICH. I have noticed that.

MR. PLATO. Quite by accident, Misser Michaelmas?

MICH. Quite by accident, Mr. Plato. (*He gives the second crown as before.*) A word more about the old wing of the house. Does nobody live in that part of it?

MR. PLATO. Not a soul, sar! De old wing was where Misser Brentwood died. His widow had de room he died in, shut up on de day ob de funeral—and nobody hab nebber opened it since.

MICH. (*aside, looking at the pocket-book*). "My room," means *that* room. Another of the mysteries cleared up. Mr. Plato!—I beg your pardon; this time there's no doubt about it—you're looking the other way already.

MR. PLATO. I am admiring my native market-place, sar. Lor-a-mussy, what a noble sight it is!

MICH. (*giving the third crown*). I want a guide to the house—a man who knows the old wing.

MR. PLATO. Nobody is allowed in de old wing, sar. Dey won't let you see it, if you ask dem.

MICH. Then I'll see it, without asking them. Can you find me a man who knows the room in which Mr. Brentwood died?

MR. PLATO. I am de only man living, sar, who knows dat.

MICH. (*aside*). I have been a little too hasty with that third crown piece. Let me invest the fourth more carefully.—Mr. Plato! Suppose I asked you to look the other way again? (MR. PLATO *instantly looks the other way.*) No! not just now—and not here.

MR. PLATO. Where den, sar?

MICH. Along the coast-road to the north. In plain English—under the window of Mr. Brentwood's room.

MR. PLATO. Widout any risk to myself, sar?

MICH. Without the smallest risk to yourself.

MR. PLATO. Misser Michaelmas, dis is just de day for a lilly little walk along de coast ob dis beautiful island! I present my compliments, and beg to offer you my arm.

MICH. Mr. Plato, I don't know which to admire most—the force of your remarks, or the polish of your manners. (*Taking his arm.*) Which way?

MR. PLATO. Dis way, sar. Take care ob de stones! Step ober de gutter! Lean on me!

(They go out together by the left lower entrance. As they disappear, WESTCRAFT is seen at the back of the stage on the right, pushing his way once more through the people. He advances to the front.)

WEST. *(with MAURICE'S cane in his hand)*. The Frenchman is coming at last—and Wolf behind him. Let him come on here! The meeting between us will be just the public meeting I want.

(MAURICE appears from the right upper entrance, followed by WOLF, and two negroes. The negroes wait behind WESTCRAFT.)

MAUR. *(advancing on one side of WESTCRAFT, while WOLF advances on the other)*. I have received an insolent message, sir, on the subject of that cane in your hand. Are you responsible for it?

WEST. Wait a little, and you will see.

MAUR. Do you want another lesson, in the presence of these people? *(He looks at the people in the market-place, who approach attracted by the quarrel.)* Once more, am I to hold you responsible for the insolence of that man? *(He points to WOLF.)*

WEST. Settle it with the man. What does it matter to me?

MAUR. *(taking off one of his gloves)*. Mr. Planter, I gave you the opportunity, this morning, of behaving like a gentleman. I told you to send your seconds to me at the hotel.

WEST. Mr. Frenchman, are you vain enough to suppose that any of my friends would take a message to you?

MAUR. That's your answer—is it?

WEST. That's my answer.

MAUR. Take mine, in return for it! *(He strikes WESTCRAFT across the face with his glove.)*

WEST. *(turning to the people)*. Bear witness all of you! He has struck me in the face with his glove.

MAUR. Miserable wretch! do you call witnesses to your own degradation? Is the commonest human feeling dead in you?

WEST. You shall see! (*He turns to WOLF.*) Wolf, how many years' experience have you had in flogging my slaves?

WOLF. Four years.

WEST. (*giving him MAURICE's cane.*) Could you flog a slave with that cane?

WOLF. (*after trying the cane.*) Yes.

WEST. (*calling to the two negroes, and pointing to MAURICE.*) Seize him!

MAUR. You ruffians! stand off!

(*He struggles with the negroes, and is overpowered. A murmur of indignation among the people. Cries of "Shame! shame! Let the gentleman go!"*)

WEST. Who calls him a gentleman? He's a slave!

MAUR. (*attempting to advance.*) What!!!

WEST. (*to MAURICE.*) You thought you heard the wind last night on the roof of the hut. I was there!

MAUR. (*overwhelmed.*) He was there!

WEST. (*appealing to the people.*) Look at him! I have declared him a slave this morning, in due form of law. Does he venture to deny it? (*To the negroes.*) Bring him to his knees! (*Another struggle between MAURICE and the negroes. A renewed murmur of indignation among the people.*) Lift a finger to help him, if you dare! You all of you saw him insult me. What is the punishment, when a slave insults a white man? Is it a flogging? Yes? or No? (*The people draw back cowed. MAURICE is forced to his knees. One of the negroes holds him; the other waits near to help if necessary. WESTCRAFT turns to WOLF.*) Wolf! take your place.

MAUR. Wolf! if you want to see a coward, look at your master!

WEST. Strike!

(*WOLF lifts the cane. At the same moment, MISS MILBURN's voice is heard from the upper entrance, to the left.*)

MISS M. (*outside.*) Make way!

(*A cry of "MISS MILBURN!" among the people.*)

(*WOLF looks towards his master, and lowers the cane.*)

WEST. Let her see it! Make way for Miss Milburn!
(*To WOLF.*) Strike!

(*WOLF lifts the cane once more.*

MAURICE struggles to his feet.)

MAUR. No! Not in her presence! No! no!

(*A commotion among the people.*)

WEST. (*to the negro*). Down with him on his knees!
(*MAURICE is forced to his knees again.*) Strike!

(*WOLF lifts the cane for the third time.*

At the same moment, MISS MILBURN rushes in through the crowd; and places herself between MAURICE and the cane. WOLF keeps the cane lifted, waiting his orders. MAURICE, humiliated, hides his face in his hands. The negro who has held him, draws back. MISS MILBURN places one hand on MAURICE'S head, and stands steadily confronting WESTCRAFT.)

MISS M. (*to WESTCRAFT*). Strike!

WEST. Are you mad? Do you know you're touching him?

MISS M. I know I'm touching him.

WEST. Do you see the people?

MISS M. I see the people.

WEST. He's a slave.

MISS M. I love him!

(*MAURICE springs up, electrified by her last words. MISS MILBURN folds her arms round him. The people cheer. The curtain falls.*)

THE END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

FIRST SCENE.—*The closed room at Brentwood House. The flat scene represents one of the walls of the room. The wall is broken by a large window, opening horizontally, on the usual English plan. The window is situated nearer to the right hand extremity of the wall (the actor's right hand) than to the left. The wall itself is hung, on either side of the window, with strips of matting—faded and dusty with age. The pattern on the matting represents bunches of roses of faded red, on a ground of dingy yellow. The piece of matting to the right (actor's right) of the window contains five rows of roses, rising longitudinally one above another, in bunches of three each. On the larger piece of matting to the left of the window the same number of rows appear on the same levels, but reaching the number of seven bunches in each row. The rows must be disposed on both pieces of matting so that there shall be one row at the top, seen above the window. The four remaining rows appear on either side of the window. Against the wall on the left is placed a large French bedstead, with musquito curtains rotted and torn in places. The bedding and pillows are covered by a ragged old silk quilt. Huge cobwebs appear in all parts of the room—which is furnished with a washhand-stand, a wardrobe, tables, chairs, &c. All the furniture must appear rotten with age, and covered with dust and dirt. On the disclosure of the scene, the window is protected outside by green Venetian blinds. The room is dark. Voices are heard, as if speaking outside, from beneath the window.*

MICH. (*outside*). Is this the window?

MR. PLATO (*outside*). Yes, sar!

(*A pause of silence. The noise of breaking wood is heard. The Venetian blinds are suddenly pulled back from outside, and are heard to catch in their fastenings against the outer wall of the house. The light flows into the room. MICHAELMAS appears, opening the lower half of the window. He enters the room.*)

MICH. If all housebreakers feel as I feel at this moment, the ancient profession of Burglary is not an enviable one! (*He looks round the room.*) Dust and dirt—cobwebs and foul air—decay in the furniture and dry rot in the walls. (*Turning to the window.*) Come in, blessed fresh air! and tell this musty mausoleum that there's life in the world as well as death. (*Calling from the window.*) Mr. Plato!

MR. PLATO (*outside*). Yes, sar!

MICH. Climb up the trelliswork, if you please, and hand me the carpenter's rule which we borrowed as we came along. (*MR. PLATO's head, crowned by an old torn straw hat, appears slowly at the sill of the window. He hands in the rule, but makes no attempt to climb higher, and enter the room.*) Won't you come in?

MR. PLATO. No, tank you, sar!

MICH. Are you afraid of being found out?

MR. PLATO. No, sar. De people ob de house nebber come dis way. Hab a reason ob my own for not going into dat room.—Do you see a nose on my face, sar?

MICH. It's rather a flat nose, Mr. Plato. Still, it *is* a nose, I admit. And what then?

MR. PLATO. Do you smell anyting particular in Misser Brentwood's room, sar?

MICH. I smell a room that hasn't been aired for years.

MR. PLATO. You call dat de smell ob a room, sar?

MICH. Yes. What do *you* call it?

MR. PLATO. I call it de smell ob a ghost! My nose takes offence at dat smell, sar. I present my compliments

to de late Misser Brentwood, and beg to leave him alone along wid you. Misser Michaelmas, I am your most obedient humble servant. Good morning!

(He disappears.)

MICH. The prime-minister of the blacks possesses a host of virtues—and a delicate nose for a ghost is one of them. Now for the hidden letter! “Clue to the hiding-place, Six Along, and Three Across.” Say it’s a matter of measurement. I’ll try it on the bed first. *(He goes to the bed, and measures along and across it with his rule—then marks certain places on the quilt with a piece of chalk which he takes from his pocket. This done, he feels the quilt—then lifts it, and searches the bedding.)* No! Mr. Brentwood’s secret has not been trusted to the bed which Mr. Brentwood died in. Where can the dead man have hidden it? The floor?

(MR. PLATO’S head appears again above the window-sill.)

MR. PLATO. Misser Michaelmas!

MICH. Here again! My friend of the delicate nose, what do you want now?

MR. PLATO. I present my compliments, sar, and beg to mention a Postscript. Suppose you find any money in dat room?

MICH. Well?

MR. PLATO. I go shares wid you—dat’s all. Cot bless you! Good morning!

(He disappears.)

MICH. Another of Mr. Plato’s virtues—he has a keen eye for the main chance. Now for the floor! Try it in feet? No! try it in yards. *(He measures with the rule, three yards across the room, and six along, and shakes his head.)* Just short of the join. Try from the other wall next. *(He begins from the wall, on the left.)* Here’s a join at last! *(He marks the place, and, putting the rule in his pocket, crawls on his hands and knees along the line, from the back of the stage to the front—starting and lifting his hands from the floor in disgust, at certain places.)* Plenty of crawling creatures—centipedes, scorpions, spiders, beetles, ants—not the ghost of a letter to be seen anywhere. *(He rises.)* Discouraging, so far. Never mind;

I have promised my master to find the hidden letter—and I'll do it! Let's try the furniture next. Where's the rule?

(He takes the rule out of his pocket.

MR. PLATO's head appears at the window-sill once more.)

MR. PLATO. Misser Michaelmas!

MICH. Here he is again! I say! if you get up and down that trelliswork under the window much oftener, you will make a perfect treadmill of it. What now?

MR. PLATO. I present my compliments, sar, and beg to mention anodder Postscript.

MICH. Mr. Plato, your spoken letters are like the written letters of young ladies—they're all Postscript. What brings you back, this time?

MR. PLATO. I hab a lilly little proposal to make, sar. You gib me ten pound down—and I leave you all de money you find in dis room to yourself. What you say to dat, sar?

MICH. Exactly what you said to me a minute ago. I am your most obedient humble servant Good morning.

(He turns away to measure the furniture.)

MR. PLATO. De cussed greediness ob dese white men is someting wonderful to see! Misser Michaelmas, sar! don't lose a fortune for de sake ob a trumpery little ten pound note. Cot bless my soul! you may pay off de debt on your estate wid de money you find in dat room.

MICH. *(measuring, and speaking to himself)*. I must be quick about it, then. The mortgagees sell my estate by auction, this very day—unless it's "previously disposed of" (as the catalogue says) "by private contract."

MR. PLATO. Did you speak, sar?

MICH. *(measuring)*. No—I didn't.

MR. PLATO. Would you honour me wid your attention for a minute, sar?

MICH. *(as before)*. Go to the devil!

MR. PLATO. I renounce de debbel and all his works. When de money tumbles down about your ears, Misser Michaelmas, you'll be sorry for dis rudeness to a black gentleman who takes an interest in you

MICH. When the money "tumbles down"? Does "the black gentleman" think it's in the ceiling or the wall?—Steady! I never thought of the wall. (*He turns towards it.*) Why mightn't the letter be hidden behind that matting?

MR. PLATO. Misser Michaelmas, sar, you are trifling wid de laws of politeness. As a polite man, myself, I beg to mention anodder lilly little Postscript.

MICH. (*measuring the wall*). Oh, bother!

MR. PLATO. No bodder, sar. On de contrary, quite a pleasure. I hab a new way ob settling dis difference between us. I present my compliments, and beg to offer you my hat. (*He offers MICHAELMAS his old torn straw hat.*) When you find de money in de wall, you put him in dere. All dat drops out ob my hat counts to me. De rest dat stops in it, counts to you. Lor-a-mussy, what a good notion dat is!

MICH. (*taking the hat, and exhibiting a hole in the crown*). Oh? All the money that doesn't fall through this hole, counts to me, does it? (*He puts back the hat on MR. PLATO'S head—then starts, struck by a new idea.*) "Counts?" Stop a minute! Have I been all this time measuring, when I ought to have counted? Where can I try it? (*He looks again at the matting.*) The pattern on the matting!

MR. PLATO (*once more offering the hat*). To Misser Michaelmas—wid Misser Plato's kind regards!

MICH. (*counting longwise on the matting at the left side of the window, as he stands facing it.*) One—two—three bunches of roses—— No! that won't do. Here's the window in the way of my counting "six along"! Suppose I try the top row of roses, on the other side of the window? (*He counts along the top row, on the right hand of the window.*) One, two, three, four, five, six—along. Now, downward from that! One, two, three—across. There's the bunch to examine! (MR. PLATO, *eagerly watching MICHAELMAS, puts on his hat, and raises himself on the window, till he sits astride on the sill. MICHAELMAS continues:*) How am I to reach it? (*He mounts on the bed, and examines the bunch of roses closely, with eye and hand.*)

MR. PLATO (*to himself*). I wonder which I am most frightened ob—seeing de ghost, or losing de money? (*He slowly puts the other leg over the window-sill.*) I tink I am most frightened ob losing de money.

MICH. (*with a cry of surprise*). What's this? (*The cry is echoed by a scream from MR. PLATO; who vaults back over the window-sill, and instantly disappears.*) Here's a slit in the matting! And a bit of string peeping out of it! And something fastened to the bit of string! (*He pulls the string.*) A letter! a sealed letter! (*He jumps off the bed, and hurries to the front.*) What's the address on it? (*He reads.*) "For the Provost Marshal." Can this be the letter my master wants? Stop! here's more writing under the address. (*He reads.*) "If the original of this is not received after my death, the Provost Marshal is requested to act on his instructions, and to deliver the enclosed duplicate to Ruth the Quadroon, with his own hand." I have found the letter!

MR. PLATO (*appearing at the window, and stammering with terror*). Misser M—m—Michaelmas!

MICH. Out of the way! I've got news for my master! I must see the Provost Marshal—I must get back to the town!

MR. PLATO. Hab you found de m-m-money, sar?

MICH. Down, you greedy dog, down! I have found this! (*He waves the letter. MR. PLATO disappears with a groan of disgust. MICHAELMAS calls down to him.*) Stand on one side! I'm going to jump for it. If I fall on the earth, I shall do very well. If I fall on your head, I shall be dashed to pieces! Out of the way!

(*He leaps from the window. The Scene changes.*)

SECOND SCENE.—*The Visitor's Room in the prison at Trinidad. Entrances on the right and left. The painting of the Flat Scene represents the "grating" behind which the prisoners are seen by their friends. MISS MILBURN enters from the right. A gaoler appears from the left, and meets her.*

MISS M. I wish to see the Count de Layrac. Here is the magistrates' order. (*She hands the order to the gaoler, who looks at it, and then opens a door, on the left. MAURICE appears.*) Good news, my darling! The doors of the prison are waiting open for you. You are released.

MAUR. And you are the first to tell me of it! Is there no limit, Emily, to your goodness?

MISS M. Hush! hush! everybody sympathises with you—why shouldn't I? The magistrates have behaved like angels. They first heard everything Westcraft had to say against you. And then they dismissed his complaint in two words. His witnesses had proved that you had publicly insulted him in the market-place: but they had *not* proved that you were punishable for it, by the laws of the island, as a slave. "At present"—the Chairman said—"we only know this gentleman as the Count de Layrac. Where is the proof of his identity with the child of Ruth the Quadroon?" Oh, what a noble thing Justice is, when it takes the right side!—Are you attending to me, Maurice? You look as if you were admiring me, instead of attending to me.

MAUR. Do I? Then my looks speak the truth. I *am* admiring you with all my heart and soul.

MISS M. You must leave off, if you please—at least for a minute or two. My love, those words of the magistrates are of more importance to both of us than you seem to think. (*MAURICE attempts to take her hand.*) No! no! my hand has nothing to do with it.

MAUR. Nothing to do with it! Is the future so far off when this hand is to be mine?

MISS M. The future may be nearer than you suppose. Only hear what I have to say to you, first. Michaelmas's

estate—with all the slaves belonging to it—is to be sold by auction this afternoon. Did you know that?

MAUR. I am afraid I know more, Emily. I am afraid *I* am one of the slaves belonging to the estate.

MISS M. Don't breathe a word of it, for Heaven's sake! Some of the people who are to profit by the sale may be within hearing. It's *their* interest—I heard them say so myself—to believe Westcraft. It's quite enough for *them* that Westcraft has declared you to be a slave. Come and contradict him instantly!

MAUR. How am I to contradict him?

MISS M. How? Say for yourself, what the magistrates have already said for you, to be sure! Nobody besides Westcraft knows the truth—except our two selves. Defeat the mercenary wretches who are bent on selling you; and then——

MAUR. And then?

MISS M. (*coquettishly*). You may take my hand, if you like!

MAUR. (*taking it*). Is it the hand of my wife?

MISS M. If you have no objection!

MAUR. When?

MISS M. When you please!

MAUR. To-day?

MISS M. If you are in a hurry—to-day! (*She resumes her usual manner.*) Why should I hesitate to tell you the truth? It's not very easy to say so in plain words—but—you won't think the worse of me?—In short, it's *I* who have hastened the time of our marriage!

MAUR. You? Ah, I understand! Your friends——

MISS M. You *don't* understand! My friends may regret the manner in which I took your part before all the people, this morning. I don't! My friends may dread the scandal-mongers of the island. I despise them! Marriage, in my sense of it, Maurice, is not to be degraded into a refuge from the opinion of the world. No! it's *you* I have thought of in this matter—not myself. After what you have suffered here, this place must be hateful to you. My love! you shan't remain a day longer on the scene of your unmerited misery, on my account. I am an orphan like you; I have no ties to keep me here.

To-morrow, at sunrise, a ship sails for France. Can you guess, now, why I have been bolder than a woman should be? Will you take me away with you, to-morrow, as your wife?

MAUR. Oh, my angel, does the man live who can be worthy of you?

MISS M. (*gaily*). I think he does! I am strongly tempted, if nobody is looking, to reward him with a kiss! (*She glances round towards the right entrance—and starts back.*) The Provost Marshal. What can he want here?

(*Enter the PROVOST MARSHAL, on the right.*)

THE PROV-MAR. I come, Count—it is useless to disguise it—on a very painful errand.

MAUR. What is it, sir?

THE PROV. MAR. One of my official duties here, is to preside at the sale of slaves by public auction——

MISS M. Is that all? My dear Mr. Provost Marshal, there is not the least fear of your presiding at the sale of the Count. He is now on his way to the Court-House, to deny that he and the slave-woman's child are one and the same. Can they sell him, after that?

THE PROV. MAR. Unquestionably not! There is no evidence to contradict him. Perfect, Miss Milburn! In the popular phrase, a complete dead-lock!

MISS M. (*to MAURICE*). You hear what he says? Come! (*MAURICE remains motionless. MISS M. continues to him aside.*) Is it possible that you hesitate? What objection can there be? You are not bound to tell anybody who you are.

MAUR. I am not bound to disclose the secret of my birth to persons who don't inquire into it. That is true, Emily. But, if the question is asked me to my face—— (*He turns to THE PROVOST MARSHAL.*)

THE PROV. MAR. I must ask it—to justify my withholding you from the sale. Your answer must be registered at my office, side by side with Westcraft's declaration.

MAUR. In that case, sir—come what may of it—I'll not

deny the mother who bore me ! I am the son of Ruth the Quadroon.

MISS M. Maurice ! Think again !

THE PROV. MAR. (*to MAURICE*). You make that admission, knowing what the consequences must be ?

MAUR. (*looking at MISS M.*). Knowing more of the consequences, sir, than you suppose !

THE PROV. MAR. I respect you.

MISS M. (*to the PROVOST MARSHAL*). Thank you for setting me the right example. He shall see that I can appreciate him too ! Slave, or free, Maurice, take the hand I promised you ; and make me your wife !

(*MAURICE presses her to his bosom in silence.*)

THE PROV. MAR. Well done, Miss Milburn ! you are a woman in a thousand !

MISS M. No. I am only a woman who loves him.—When must you take him away ?

(*As the PROVOST MARSHAL looks at his watch before answering, WESTCRAFT enters from the right, with the catalogue of the sale in his hand.*)

MISS M. (*indignantly*). What do you want here ?

(*MAURICE looks at WESTCRAFT, and preserves a steady silence throughout the Scene.*)

WEST. (*to the PROVOST MARSHAL, without noticing MISS M.*). The mortgagees claim that man (*pointing to MAURICE*) as part of the property which they dispose of at the coming sale. Does he deny that he is a slave ?

THE PROV. MAR. He has acknowledged it, sir, of his own free will.

WEST. (*marking the catalogue*). I shall attend the sale.

MISS M. And bid for him ?

WEST. And bid for him.

MISS M. Wait a little ! (*To THE PROVOST MARSHAL*). You have not answered my question yet. When must the Count appear at the sale ?

THE PROV. MAR. In an hour.

MISS M. He will have time, before he goes, to fulfil his engagement with *me*.

WEST. Mr. Provost Marshal ! if you lose sight of him

for a moment, on any pretence whatever, you are answerable for it if he escapes!

MISS M. Mr. Provost Marshal, you and the rector are the two oldest friends I have in the island. The rector is waiting, at my house, to marry me to Count de Layrac——

WEST. What!!!

MISS M. (*to THE PROVOST MARSHAL, without noticing WESTCRAFT*). Will you attend the ceremony, and give me away?

THE PROV. MAR. With the greatest pleasure!

MISS M. (*turning to WESTCRAFT*). The Provost Marshal shall *not* lose sight of him, sir!—Maurice!

(*She takes MAURICE's arm.*)

WEST. I shall have the pleasure of buying your husband, Miss Milburn, in an hour's time.

MISS M. I shall outbid you, Mr. Westcraft. I am the richest of the two.

WEST. Will you spend your whole fortune on him?

MISS M. To the last farthing.

(*She signs to the PROVOST MARSHAL to precede them, and goes out with MAURICE, on the right.*)

WEST, Damn her—she will be as good as her word! The sympathies of the whole island will be with her; she will buy her husband away from me with a nod of her head. There's no preventing it. It's a public sale. (*He looks mechanically at the title-page of the catalogue—and starts.*) Stop a minute! (*He reads.*)
 “The House, Plantation, Slaves, Live Stock, &c. &c., to be sold by Auction—unless previously disposed of by Private Contract.” How came I to overlook that? It's in my power to stop the sale! I have only to give the terms asked by the solicitors—and the Estate, and everything on it will be mine!

(*He hurries out on the right. The Scene changes.*)

LAST SCENE. — *The Market-place. Groups of people assembled, both whites and blacks. Two Planters among the crowd, with sale catalogues in their hands.*

FIRST PLANTER. What does this mean? It's past the time—and no signs of the sale.

SECOND PLANTER. Here's the place where the auctioneer's pulpit always stands—and here (*showing his catalogue*) is the notice calling us together in the market-place!

FIRST PLANTER. There's something wrong. Where can we find out the truth?

SECOND PLANTER. At the Provost Marshal's office, to be sure. (*He looks off towards the left.*) Stop! Here is the Provost Marshal himself.

(*The PROVOST MARSHAL enters by the left, with MAURICE and MISS M. The people crowd round them eagerly.*)

THE PROV. MAR. Gently, good people! Gently! Madame de Layrac accepts your congratulations on her marriage to the Count. Let us pass, if you please. (*The crowd opens.*) What's this? No sale! Why, it ought to have begun half an hour since!

MISS M. Have we made any mistake?

THE PROV. MAR. Certainly not!

MAUR. Is it here that I am to be sold?

THE PROV. MAR. Here—in the market-place—where all public sales are held. (*WESTCRAFT appears, on the right, among the people.*) Excuse my leaving you, Madame de Layrac. I must go at once to my office, and find out why the auction is delayed.

WEST. (*advancing*). You may spare yourself the trouble. The auction is stopped.

THE PROV. MAR. Stopped!

WEST. Yes! The notice has been sent to your office. I have bought the estate, and everything on it, by private contract. There is the solicitor's receipt! (*He shows a slip of paper to the PROVOST MARSHAL.*)

MISS M. (*to the PROVOST MARSHAL*). What does he mean?

WEST. I mean what I say. You rated your husband, madam, at the value of all your fortune. I have rated my revenge at the value of all mine. That man is my slave. I claim him by right of purchase. (*To MAURICE.*) Take your leave of your wife—and follow me!

MISS M. His wife goes with him—go where he may!

WEST. I forbid it. He has married without his master's permission. I refuse to let him live on my plantation with his wife.

MISS M. (*to the PROVOST MARSHAL*). He can't part me from my husband?

THE PROV. MAR. I grieve to say it—he can.

MISS M. Maurice, do you hear that?

MAUR. (*gently silencing her*). Hush! (*He leaves her with the PROVOST MARSHAL, and advances towards WESTCRAFT.*) Mr. Westcraft! your slave has a word to say to you—on the subject of his wife.

WEST. Oh? you have found your tongue, have you? You were silent enough, when we last met.

MAUR. When we last met, my conscience told me I had offences to answer for, on my side. I remembered, then, that I had come between you and the hope of your life—once centered in *her*. I remembered, then, that I had twice let my temper get the better of me, and twice personally insulted you. Up to the moment when you came here to claim me, I would have owned it anywhere—of the two, you were the injured man.

WEST. I *was* the injured man? Who has wiped out my injuries, if you please?

MAUR. You!!!—with your own hand. I say it here—where I was humiliated; rightly humiliated for forcing a public quarrel on you. I say it here, in the presence of the people. If I had wronged you tenfold, the reckoning between us would be even now! The vengeance you have taken, is the cowardly vengeance that strikes at me through my wife. Reptile! you have forborne to sting till *she* was near enough to me to feel it too. Tiger! you have waited to tear me, till you could tear me from *her* arms. (*He suddenly takes his wife from the PROVOST MARSHAL, who has thus far supported her.*) Here she is, on her husband's bosom. No tears, Emily! your tears are a part of his revenge! Here she

is, where the laws of God and man have placed her. You have bought the power to take me from her—use it if you dare! Part us; and the prison isn't built that will hold me, the lash isn't knotted that will tame me, the law isn't made that can keep me from righting my own wrong. Part us; and so help me Heaven, you do it at the peril of your life!

WEST. *My prison will hold you! my lash will tame you! my slaves will take you from her by main force! (A noise of contending voices is heard outside.)* For the last time—follow me!

MAUR. *(to his wife)*. Courage, my love! courage!
(The noise outside grows louder. MICHAELMAS'S voice is heard among the rest.)

WEST. *(to MAURICE)*. You will have it! *(He looks round among the crowd at the back.)* Wolf! Where is Wolf?

MICH. *(outside)*. Where is my master? *(He rushes in, through the people, breathless and dusty. WOLF and his negroes appear behind.)* I have found the letter! *(MAURICE looks at him absently.)* What has happened to you, sir? Have you forgotten the duplicate letter—the letter you were so anxious to find?

MAUR. *(wearily)*. Yes, yes. Never mind now.

MICH. *(in amazement)*. Never mind? *(He turns, bewildered, to the PROVOST MARSHAL.)* I can't do wrong in delivering the letter, I suppose? It's addressed to you, sir.

THE PROV. MAR. I'll look at it later. I can't attend to it now. *(He takes the letter, and glances mechanically at the address, before putting it into his pocket.)* Mr. Brentwood's handwriting! Instructions to me to deliver the enclosure to Ruth, the Quadroon——?

WEST. What's that about Ruth the Quadroon? If it concerns her son, I protest against any suppression of evidence. I'm his master—and I have a right to know all about it.

THE PROV. MAR. *(pursuing his train of thought)*. "Instructions?" I never received any instructions. Did his jealous wife intercept *this* message, as she intercepted all the rest?

WEST. Do you hear what I say? I claim an interest in that letter. I insist on your reading it, before I take him away!

THE PROV. MAR. (*looking at MISS M.*). The gain of a few minutes, is something gained for his poor wife! (*To WESTCRAFT.*) You shall have your way. I will read the letter.

(*He opens the letter—starts—and turns eagerly to the end, while WESTCRAFT speaks the words that follow.*)

WEST. Not to yourself! Read it out, if you please!

THE PROV. MAR. Accept my best acknowledgments, Mr. Westcraft, for your interference! But for you, I might have delayed reading this letter, and have repented it for the rest of my life.

WEST. Out with it! What does the letter tell you?

THE PROV. MAR. You have spent all your fortune on buying the Michaelmas estate. (*MICHAELMAS starts.*) The letter tells me you have *not* bought the Count de Layrac. (*He hands the letter to MAURICE.*) There is your mother's freedom—signed by Mr. Brentwood's own hand!

(*The people cheer. MAURICE and MISS M. express their gratitude to MICHAELMAS.*)

WEST. It's a forgery! I dispute that paper!

THE PROV. MAR. (*contemptuously*). A man like you always disputes the truth.

WEST. I'll spend my last shilling in disputing it!

MICH. You can't do that, Mr. Westcraft. You have spent your last shilling on my estate.

(*WESTCRAFT looks at MICHAELMAS with a cry of baffled rage, and goes out. MAURICE and MISS M. come down to the front; MISS M. having the letter in her hand.*)

MISS M. Oh, Maurice! can you realise it yet? Free!

MAUR. (*taking her hand*). No. Yours!

THE END.

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